

branch, and I hope that we will unanimously support it.

I would reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of S. 3569 is to implement noncontroversial administrative provisions that the Judicial Conference and the House Judiciary Committee believe are necessary to improve the operations of the Federal judiciary. These provisions will provide justice for the American people as well.

The Judicial Conference is the policy-making body of the Federal judiciary, and through its committee system, it evaluates court operations. The conference endorses all of the provisions in this bill, which the other body passed by unanimous consent.

S. 3569 affects a wide range of judicial branch programs and operations, including those pertaining to financial administration, process improvements, and personnel administration.

The House has passed five of the bills' provisions in previous Congresses.

The bill incorporates 18 separate items, including a section that eliminates the noticing and public drawing requirements for selecting names from jury wheels because the process is performed by computers; a section that adds magistrate judges to the list of circuit, district, and bankruptcy judges who may be summoned to attend circuit Judicial Conferences; a section that clarifies a court may bring individuals into court when they do not respond to a jury summons, thus eliminating non-meritorious challenges to an impaneled jury; a section that eliminates an obsolete provision in the Bankruptcy Code relating to the calculation of uniform percentage dollar adjustments; and a section that increases penalties for employers who retaliate against employees serving on jury duty.

Mr. Speaker, S. 3569 is necessary to improve the functioning of the U.S. courts which will ultimately benefit the country and the American people. This is a noncontroversial bill, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

I want to point out that for the third consecutive time now, I have agreed with my colleague from California, Congresswoman ZOE LOFGREN, in supporting this piece of legislation, specifically S. 3569.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SMITH of Texas. I will be happy to yield to the gentleman.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. I would just note this bill, while perhaps boring to many Members, is important to us. And it is a measure that we have adopted with so many of these Members in prior Congresses, and yet because they have to do with down-in-the-weeds issues in the Judiciary, they don't always get the attention that they should.

I'm hopeful, and I'm glad, that we have worked so collaboratively to-

gether on these but that we can really work in partnership with our other branch of government for some of these efficiency things. They're not big policy issues, but they're things that will make the judiciary more effective. They need our help in many cases to do that. And I think this may be a marker that we're ready to really hold our hands out in that effort.

And I do thank the gentleman for yielding.

□ 1915

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I just want to reply and say that I agree with the points made by the gentleman from California. They are excellent ones, and we might also add that in a bill like this like, so many bills that are considered by the House and that have been marked up and approved by the Judiciary Committee, sometimes we're talking about sort of arcane subject matter, and yet so much of what is incorporated in this bill and so much of what is part of many other bills do help the judicial process. They do help the American people get better justice. They either save the American people time or they make sure that there's a more ethical result as a result of the actions of the court, and in this particular bill, as a result of the actions of the juries themselves.

So bills like this may seem, at first glance, to either be somewhat technical or somewhat even incomprehensible, but at the bottom line they do improve the justice system of the United States, which can give everybody, I think, a sense of confidence that not only does the system work, but it works in this case in a bipartisan way since Members of both parties do support this legislation which improves the justice system.

I would be happy to yield to the gentleman from California again if she would like.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. I thank the gentleman for yielding. And as you and I both serve on the Courts and Intellectual Property Subcommittee, and most of what we have done has been on the intellectual property side of that, and important as that work is, this is a measure that the court side also is important.

So, again, I look forward to next year. I think both you and I will return and dig in on some of these issues.

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Reclaiming my time, this being the end of the congressional session, with the expectation that we might well adjourn or go into recess tomorrow until next year, it's not often that we on the House floor can recognize the towns of our colleagues. And I would just like to say in this case that the gentleman from California, while she mentioned the Intellectual Property Subcommittee, which reminds me of her talents and her interests in high-tech issues, and she does represent a good part of Silicon Valley, so she comes by her talents and her expertise naturally.

But in addition to that, she was formerly, before coming to Congress, an immigration attorney. She happens to be chairman of the Immigration Subcommittee today, and so she brings to that subcommittee, as she does the Intellectual Property Subcommittee, a number of talents and skills that benefit the House as a whole and benefit the Judiciary Committee, in particular.

So I would just like to thank her for her work these last few years on those subjects and so many other subjects that she brings these skills to and has helped promote both on the floor and in the Judiciary Committee itself.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I would just like to thank Mr. SMITH for his enormously complimentary and gracious comments. I look forward to working with him next year. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ZOE LOFGREN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 3569.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the Senate bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXTENDING FUNDS FOR COMMUNITY FOOD PROJECTS

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 3597) to provide that funds allocated for community food projects for fiscal year 2008 shall remain available until September 30, 2009.

The Clerk read the title of the Senate bill.

The text of the Senate bill is as follows:

S. 3597

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. COMMUNITY FOOD PROJECTS.

(a) TECHNICAL CORRECTION.—Section 4406(a)(7) of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-234; 122 Stat. 1902) is amended by striking "Food and Nutrition Act of 2008" and inserting "Food Stamp Act of 1977".

(b) ALLOCATION OF FUNDS.—Funds allocated under section 25(b) of the Food Stamp Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 2034(b)) for fiscal year 2008 shall remain available until September 30, 2009, to fund proposals solicited in fiscal year 2008.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. BACA) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may

have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on S. 3597.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 3597. I thank my colleagues in the Senate. I thank my colleague Mr. GOODLATTE, as well as Mr. HARKIN, for introducing this legislation. I introduced its House counterpart, H.R. 6981.

This bill is, quite simply, a technical fix of the 2008 farm bill.

I want to thank all of my colleagues for their cooperation in bringing this technical fix to the floor. With its passage, we will ensure the fiscal year 2008 funding for a very nutritional program, the Community Food Projects.

Due to an unintended error in title IV of the farm bill, we mistakenly limited USDA's authority to award grants under this program in this fiscal year. This same fix was passed by unanimous consent in the Senate, and CBO has scored this bill at zero.

Community Food Projects is a forward-thinking grant program that encourages innovative local efforts to expand the availability of affordable and healthful foods. This program is critical to those who live in both urban and rural areas who may not have regular access to nutritional foods needed to raise a healthy family.

I urge my colleagues to voice their support for healthy families and vote "yes" on S. 3597.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I thank my colleague, the subcommittee chairman, as well as Chairman PETERSON, for their work, along with others on this side of the aisle, and join them in supporting S. 3597.

This bill makes a technical correction to the Nutrition title of the 2008 farm bill. This measure will ensure funds allocated for Community Food Projects in fiscal year 2008 remain available through fiscal year 2009. Without this correction, valuable grant funding will be lost.

S. 3597 will allow the U.S. Department of Agriculture to carry this funding forward to provide grants that help communities respond to local nutrition issues.

Because of the importance of this funding and the value that communities find in utilizing these funds to help people in need, providing food for them, I urge my colleagues to support S. 3597.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, again, I want to encourage support for the Community Food Projects. This is a valuable grant. This is a technical error that was done. I thank the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE)

for his support in this bipartisan effort. This is a correction of a technical error.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. BACA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 3597.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the Senate bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF HUMAN CAPITAL OFFICER

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 2816) to provide for the appointment of the Chief Human Capital Officer of the Department of Homeland Security by the Secretary of Homeland Security.

The Clerk read the title of the Senate bill.

The text of the Senate bill is as follows:

S. 2816

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. APPOINTMENT OF THE CHIEF HUMAN CAPITAL OFFICER BY THE SECRETARY OF HOMELAND SECURITY.

Section 103(d) of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 113(d)) is amended—

- (1) by striking paragraph (3); and
- (2) redesignating paragraphs (4) and (5) as paragraphs (3) and (4), respectively.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) and the gentleman from California (Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from North Carolina?

There was no objection.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 2816.

This measure seeks to change how the Chief Human Capital Officer is appointed by the Department of Homeland Security. It will bring DHS in line with other Federal agencies who are able to choose whether they have a Chief Human Capital Officer that is a career employee or a political appointee. Granting this authority now is important to transition to the next administration.

□ 1930

The Chief Human Capital Officer serves as the Department's lead execu-

tive for all matters relating to workforce management. Among the responsibilities of the Chief Human Capital Officer are strategic planning, training and development, recruitment, compensation, benefits, and employee relations.

The task of serving as the CHCO at DHS is particularly challenging when you consider that since DHS' inception, it has faced a series of personnel challenges, including; merging 22 separate agencies into one cabinet-level agency with a combined workforce of over 200,000 people; promoting integration among employees and an appreciation of their role within DHS; and confronting ongoing recruitment and retention challenges.

Low employee morale has been a chronic issue for DHS since it was established in 2003. In fact, in both its 2004 and 2006 workforce surveys, the Office of Personnel Management found that DHS' employee morale ranked among the lowest of any cabinet-level department.

In the 2006 OPM survey, the Department was rated "dead last" in job satisfaction among its peers and received very low marks on leadership and management capabilities.

Just last year, the Department's own internal Employee Survey revealed that poor morale remained a major problem. Workers cited pay, performance, and promotion practices as some of the sources of their discontent.

Moreover, documented incidents reveal that the management within some of the most prominent DHS components do not value diversity in their operations. This, too, contributes to low morale. These results are clearly unacceptable in our government. The next CHCO has to make it "job-one" to tackle the underlying causes of the discontent.

With the change in administration, the next CHCO has an enormous opportunity to turn things around. The Department must properly address employee dissatisfaction by focusing and implementing career development for its employees. DHS should also ensure that its employees receive proper training and adequate resources necessary to get their jobs done.

DHS must recruit the best and the brightest because we're asking them to do one of the most important jobs in the Federal Government, protect this country. These efforts can only be achieved through an effective Chief Human Capital Officer. Unfortunately, over the past 5½ years, six people have held this office at DHS. That is a tremendous turnover. Stable leadership will help DHS address the magnitude and multitude of its workforce management challenges. This legislation will help provide that stable leadership.

I stand in support of this legislation, and urge its passage.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.